

City of Riverside, California
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

MINUTES

Thursday, February 15, 2007, 6:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Human Relations Commission was held on Thursday, February 15, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. at the Solander Community Center, 7801 Gramercy Place., Riverside, CA 92503.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chani Beeman, Susan Carpenter, Aric Isom, Sherry Gordon, Haydee Llanes, Suzanna Medina, A.J. Wilson, Sonya Walker, Lorraine Saint, Raj Singh, Viet Tran, Marisa Valdez-Yeager, Omar Zaki

STAFF PRESENT: Yvette Pierre

ALSO PRESENT: Jenny Hong

ABSENT: None

EXCUSED: Gladys Walker

A quorum was established at 6:25pm and the meeting was called to order. A motion was made to excuse Commissioner Gladys Walker due to a work-related scheduling conflict.

M/S/C: Isom/Wilson/Carried

SELF INTRODUCTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT CALENDAR

The December 14, 2006 minutes were approved, with the following modifications: Commissioner Gordon was marked as "excused" instead of absent from the December 14, 2006 meeting.

M/S/A/C: Isom/Medina/Abstention from Commissioner Gordon/Carried

REGULAR ITEMS

Executive Committee Report/Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Beeman updated the Commission on the RPD Diversity Training and provided the new Commissioners with background on how the training came about. The Chairperson also indicated that the Commission's contribution had been successful.

The Chairperson informed Commissioners about The Riverside Fair Housing Council's training to become a volunteer, scheduled from 9am until noon on Saturday, February 17, 2007.

The Chairperson informed Commissioners about Community Relations issues pertaining to recent City Council meetings such as the public's concerns to pull and review consent calendar items, and the uncivil and disruptive conduct of certain members of the public, as well as certain members of the City Council. The Chairperson informed the Commission of the Mayor's attention to the matter, but also encouraged Commissioners to view the most recent City Council meetings via the internet (www.riversideca.gov) or via cable TV in order to get first-hand knowledge of the situation.

Working Committee Report

Inter Faith Working Committee Chairperson Sonya Walker reported that with the resignation of Commissioner Jan Moore, along with her own departure (due to term ending) there would only be two Commissioners left on the Inter Faith Working Committee. Commissioner Walker recommended that:

(1) either one of the remaining Commissioners become the new Chairperson of the Inter Faith Working Committee, or that

(2) the full Commission "re-vote" to form a new working committee(s).

Commissioner Zaki suggested that since there were so many new Commissioners, the Commission should go back to the procedure they followed a few months prior and determine everyone's interest and "re-vote" on a new working committee that would be of interest to all. A motion was made to re-examine working committee topics.

M/S/C: S. Walker/Zaki/Carried.

Chairperson Beeman went around the table and asked each Commissioner to present potential ideas or topics to organize working committees around. A discussion ensued and the following seven (7) working committee topics and ideas were generated:

1. Signature Event Working Committee
2. Inter Faith Working Committee
3. Police and Community Relations Working Committee
4. Community Crisis Plan Working Committee
5. Youth Outreach Working Committee/Youth Motivation Task Force
6. Marketing and Outreach Working Committee
7. Inter Group Relations Working Committee

Chairperson Beeman indicated that we will present the 7 ideas in writing and provide a brief synopsis of each Commissioner's interest as part of the agenda packet for the next meeting. This will allow Commissioners time to review the list and come prepared at the next meeting to adopt the working committee(s) of their choice. In addition, the Executive Committee will look at the list at their next meeting and make sure that the list has captured each Commissioner's interest and input.

Commissioner Wilson asked that the Commission look at other activities going on in the City so that the Commission is not duplicating another group's activities.

Staff Report

Staff briefly discussed the current HRC Budget, the HRC Calendar, the HRC Website, HRC business cards, the status of the draft HRC Public Service Announcement (PSA), HRC Election of new officers in March, New Commissioner Orientation required by the City Clerk's office, the HRC April Retreat/Orientation to be held before the April Commission meeting and introduced potential Youth HRC Commissioner, Jenny Hong.

Staff also presented a 2007 List of Priorities which contained 29 items for discussion. This list will be collapsed into a shorter list for review at the next meeting and in addition to the establishment of the 2007 Working Committee(s), will be used to plan, budget and calendar the Commission's activities for the 2007 calendar year.

OTHER MATTERS

Request for funds for Multicultural Youth Festival

At its February 1, 2007 meeting, the Executive Committee approved the expenditure of HRC funds for the City of Riverside's Multicultural Youth Festival, pending HRC budget verification, which Staff provided.

A motion was made to approve the request for funds.

M/S/C: Wilson/Yeager/Carried.

Final Review of Damon Castillo's Report

Commissioner Wilson suggested that the Commission receive and file the report. Commissioner Gordon expressed concern that she had only received the report that day and would like time to review the recommendations in more depth. Commissioner Carpenter felt that the report recommendations should be placed on the next meeting agenda for discussion.

A motion was made to receive and file the report, provided however that the recommendations from the report be placed on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting.

M/S/C: Wilson/Gordon/Carried.

Request to appoint Youth Human Relations Commissioner

Jenny Hong introduced herself and gave a brief background of her involvement in youth activities. A motion was made to appoint to Jenny Hong as a Youth Human Relations Commissioner, pending discussion and verifications of proper procedure with the City Clerk and previous HRC Staff.

M/S/C: Wilson/Yeager/Carried.

Request for HRC participation in President Bush's Volunteer Service Award Program

Commissioner Isom briefly explained the award program. Commissioner Wilson indicated that it would require enough Commissioner time to actually be included as a possible Working Committee.

Commissioner Isom thought it could be added as part of the Outreach and Education Working Committee.

Commissioner Gordon suggested that it was more of an activity and should be added to the 2007 Priorities List. A motion was made to place the program for consideration on both the 2007 Working Committee List, as well as the 2007 Priorities List for consideration at the next meeting.

M/S/C: Wilson/Gordon/Carried.

Correspondence

HRC Correspondence included a letter for review from Commissioner A.J. Wilson regarding his response to Dr. Damon Castillo's report on the Human Relations Commission, a letter from the Riverside Community Health Foundation informing the Commission of an opportunity to participate in the Eastside Health Center's Sixth Annual Community Fair on Saturday, April 7, 2007, and an invitation from the World Affairs Council of Inland Southern California to a reception and dinner for the Consul General of the People's Republic of China (date passed). Commissioner Wilson asked that participation in the Eastside Health Center's Annual Community Fair be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. A motion was made to receive and file the correspondence.

M/S/C: Wilson/Gordon/Carried.

Commissioner Comments

Vice-Chairperson Isom asked that Commissioners go around the room and give any comments that they wished to give. Commissioner Valdez-Yeager expressed regret that she was unable to participate in the Black History Parade this year. Commissioner Tran expressed congratulations to Jenny Hong on being appointed as the Youth HRC Commissioner and said that he is looking forward to working with everyone on the Commission. Commissioner Saint indicated it was her first meeting as a new Commissioner and that she is looking forward to working with everyone. She also asked if there was a possibility to have dinner before the meetings, because with the 6pm start time, it was difficult to have dinner beforehand. Commissioner Sonya Walker indicated it was her last meeting as a Commissioner, and that it had been a pleasure serving on the Commission and she could see the energy and enthusiasm of the new Commissioners and she looks forward to seeing what the Commission will do in the future. Commissioner Gordon welcomed all the new members. Commissioner Singh indicated it was his first meeting and that he enjoyed the discussion and meeting everyone. Commissioner Wilson welcomed all the new Commissioners and asked them to read his letter to the Executive Committee regarding Damon Castillo's report and expressed his desire as a Commissioner to make a difference in the City of Riverside. Jenny Hong expressed her thanks at being chosen as a Youth Human Relations Commissioner and her hopes to improve relationships with adults and youth in the City of Riverside. Commissioner Medina welcomed new Commissioners and asked if we would have RPD representation. Staff informed Commissioner Medina that it had been agreed between the Mayor's office and the RPD that an RPD representative would be present at Commission meetings on an "as-needed" basis. Commissioner Medina and Commissioner Valdez-Yeager both asked if this issue could be brought back and put on the agenda for the next meeting since they felt that an RPD representative needed to be present at every meeting. Commissioner Llanes requested that the meeting locations not be so difficult to find and also requested that a disclaimer be placed on the forwarding of emails by Staff because it gives the impression that the Commission is endorsing certain issues, events, and social or political views, when they are not. Staff indicated that a disclaimer would be developed for Commissioner's approval. Commissioner Carpenter welcomed new Commissioners and expressed that she still felt like a new Commissioner herself and was still very confused about the mission of the Human Relations Commission until she read the 2005 Annual Report on the HRC website. She also indicated she had visited the CAHRO website (www.cahro.org) and that it might be useful to have a history given of Riverside's HRC and if the Chair and Staff could explain what the real needs of the City are right now and what the Commission's ongoing programs are for right now. Commissioner Zaki was concerned that we didn't give the three new Commissioners any time to introduce themselves and asked if at the next meeting we could set aside some time. Commissioner Wilson indicated that a lot of the questions by new Commissioners will be answered at the April training/meeting. Commissioner Llanes indicated that former Commissioner St. Pierre was creating a history of the HRC. Staff responded that former Commissioner St. Pierre's work would be useful in the development of the PSA. Commissioner Zaki and Commissioner Isom expressed how nice they thought the Gandhi Statue Rededication event had been and the visit from the Ambassador of India. Commissioner Isom welcomed the new Commissioners and welcomed back some of the older Commissioners who had been absent. He encouraged everyone to continue to be present and give their full participation to the Commission, and expressed that if Commissioners need to leave before the work is complete, the remaining Commissioners should not push things to the next meeting. He also encouraged all Commissioners to read the City Ordinance that created the Human Relations Commission to understand our mandate.

Staff Comments

Staff indicated that the HRC Roster needed to be updated and asked Commissioners to check their information carefully on the roster and make necessary changes. Staff also expressed how proud she was of all the Commissioners for their attendance and hoped it would continue for the future, as the Commission can not function well as a Commission with input from only one or two Commissioners.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.